

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
NORTHERN DIVISION

RALPH EDWARD PARISH,

Petitioner,

v.

Case No. 2:10-cv-254  
HON. R. ALLAN EDGAR

GREGG MCQUIGGIN,

Respondent.

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**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Petitioner Ralph Edward Parish filed this petition for writ of habeas corpus challenging his conviction for criminal sexual conduct under MCL § 750.520B(1)(b). Petitioner was convicted by a jury on March 23, 2007, and sentenced to a term of 10 to 30 years imprisonment. The respondent has filed an answer and has complied with Rule 5 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts.

Petitioner has raised the following claims:

I. M.C.L.A. is substantive law, not a rule of procedure, vesting in petition substantive due process rights.

II. The trial court could not vary or forgive untimely filing of the notice required under MCL 768.27a.

III. There is no greater arbitrary and oppressive exercise of government authority than the usurpation of power from one branch of government to another.

IV. The Michigan Supreme Court has exclusive rule making authority when it comes to rule of procedure.

After petitioner's conviction, he filed a motion for a new trial in the trial court. In his motion petitioner asserted challenges to MCL § 768.27a. That motion was denied by the trial court on January 10, 2008. Petitioner filed an application for leave to appeal with the Michigan Court of Appeals. The Michigan Court of Appeals denied the application on November 19, 2009, because they were not persuaded that the questions presented should be reviewed by the court. The Michigan Supreme Court denied leave to appeal on May 5, 2009, and denied petitioner's motion for reconsideration on June 16, 2009.

In April of 1996, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA) became effective. Because this petition was filed after the effective date of the AEDPA, this Court must follow the standard of review established in that statute. Pursuant to the AEDPA, an application for writ of habeas corpus on behalf of a person who is incarcerated pursuant to a state conviction cannot be granted with respect to any claim that was adjudicated on the merits in state court unless the adjudication: “(1) resulted in a decision that was contrary to, or involved an unreasonable application of, clearly established federal law as determined by the Supreme Court of the United States; or (2) resulted in a decision that was based upon an unreasonable determination of the facts in light of the evidence presented in the state court proceeding.” 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d).

The AEDPA limits the source of law to cases decided by the United States Supreme Court. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d). This provision marks a “significant change” and prevents the district court from looking to lower federal court decisions in determining whether the state decision is contrary to, or an unreasonable application of, clearly established federal law. *Herbert v. Billy*, 160 F.3d 1131, 1134 (6th Cir. 1998). To justify a grant of habeas corpus relief under this provision of the AEDPA, a federal court must find a violation of law “clearly established” by holdings of the Supreme Court, as opposed to its dicta, as of the time of the relevant state court decision. *Williams*

*v. Taylor*, 529 U.S. 362, 412 (2000). Recently, the Supreme Court held that a decision of the state court is “contrary to” such clearly established federal law “if the state court arrives at a conclusion opposite to that reached by this Court on a question of law or if the state court decides a case differently than this Court has on a set of materially indistinguishable facts.” *Id.* A state court decision will be deemed an “unreasonable application” of clearly established federal law “if the state court identifies the correct governing legal principle from this Court’s decisions but unreasonably applies that principle to the facts of the prisoner’s case.” *Id.* A federal habeas court may not find a state adjudication to be “unreasonable” “simply because that court concludes in its independent judgment that the relevant state-court decision applied clearly established federal law erroneously or incorrectly.” *Id.* at 412. Rather, the application must also be “unreasonable.” *Id.* Further, the habeas court should not transform the inquiry into a subjective one by inquiring whether all reasonable jurists would agree that the application by the state court was unreasonable. *Id.* at 410 (disavowing *Drinkard v. Johnson*, 97 F.3d 751, 769 (5th Cir. 1996)). Rather, the issue is whether the state court’s application of clearly established federal law is “objectively unreasonable.” *Williams*, 529 U.S. at 409.

The AEDPA requires heightened respect for state factual findings. *Herbert v. Billy*, 160 F.3d 1131, 1134 (6th Cir. 1998). The habeas corpus statute has long provided that the factual findings of the state courts, made after a hearing, are entitled to a presumption of correctness. This presumption has always been accorded to findings of state appellate courts, as well as the trial court. *See Sumner v. Mata*, 449 U.S. 539, 546 (1981); *Smith v. Jago*, 888 F.2d 399, 407 n.4 (6th Cir. 1989), *cert. denied*, 495 U.S. 961 (1990). Under the AEDPA, a determination of a factual issue made by a state court is presumed to be correct. The petitioner has the burden of rebutting the presumption

of correctness by clear and convincing evidence. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(e)(1); *see also Warren v. Smith*, 161 F.3d 358, 360-61 (6th Cir. 1998), *cert. denied*, 527 U.S. 1040 (1999).

Petitioner asserts, as he did in the state courts, that MCL § 768.27a violated his rights, because the act fails to establish what is admissible evidence. Petitioner claims that the act is an arbitrary and an oppressive exercise of the Michigan legislature and that the Michigan Supreme Court has exclusive rule making authority involving procedural matters. Petitioner also asserts that the prosecutor violated notice procedures under the statute. A federal court may not issue a writ of habeas corpus on the basis of a perceived error of state law. *Pulley v. Harris*, 465 U.S. 37, 41 (1984); *Engle v. Isaac*, 456 U.S. 107, 119 (1982); *Smith v. Sowders*, 848 F.2d 735, 738 (6th Cir. 1988), *cert. denied* 488 U.S. 866 (1988). “[S]uch an inquiry . . . is no part of a federal court’s habeas review of a state conviction.” *Estelle v. McGuire*, 502 U.S. 62, 67 (1991). In *Estelle v. McGuire*, the Supreme Court addressed the issue of whether the admission of evidence in violation of California state law entitled a petitioner to habeas corpus relief.

We have stated many times that “federal habeas corpus relief does not lie for errors of state law.” *Lewis v. Jeffers*, 497 U.S. 764, 780, 110 S. Ct. 3092, 3102, 111 L. Ed. 2d 606 (1990); *see also Pulley v. Harris*, 465 U.S. 37, 41, 104 S. Ct. 871, 874-75, 79 L. Ed. 2d 29 (1984). Today, we reemphasize that it is not the province of a federal habeas court to reexamine state-court determinations on state-law questions. In conducting habeas review, a federal court is limited to deciding whether a conviction violated the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States. 28 U.S.C. § 2241; *Rose v. Hodges*, 423 U.S. 19, 21, 96 S. Ct. 175, 177, 46 L. Ed. 2d 162 (1975) (*per curiam*).

*Estelle v. McGuire*, 502 U.S. at 67-8.

Petitioner raises only matters of state law that are not actionable in a federal habeas proceeding.<sup>1</sup> In summary, the undersigned concludes that Petitioner's claims are without merit and therefore recommends that this Court dismiss the petition with prejudice.

In addition, if Petitioner should choose to appeal this action, I recommend that a certificate of appealability be denied as to each issue raised by the Petitioner in this application for habeas corpus relief. Under 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2), the court must determine whether a certificate of appealability should be granted. A certificate should issue if Petitioner has demonstrated a "substantial showing of a denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2).

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals has disapproved issuance of blanket denials of a certificate of appealability. *Murphy v. Ohio*, 263 F.3d 466 (6th Cir. 2001). Rather, the district court must "engage in a reasoned assessment of each claim" to determine whether a certificate is warranted. *Id.* Each issue must be considered under the standards set forth by the Supreme Court in *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473 (2000). *Murphy*, 263 F.3d at 467. Consequently, the undersigned has examined each of Petitioner's claims under the *Slack* standard.

Under *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484, to warrant a grant of the certificate, "[t]he petitioner must demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims debatable or wrong." The undersigned concludes that reasonable jurists could not find that a dismissal of each of Petitioner's claims was debatable or wrong. Therefore, the undersigned recommends that the court deny Petitioner a certificate of appealability.

NOTICE TO PARTIES: Objections to this Report and Recommendation must be served on opposing parties and filed with the Clerk of the Court within fourteen (14) days of receipt

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<sup>1</sup>To the extent Petitioner's claims could be interpreted to raise questions cognizable in a federal habeas action, these claims were never presented to the state courts.

of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); W.D. Mich. LCivR 72.3(b). Failure to file timely objections constitutes a waiver of any further right to appeal. *United States v. Walters*, 638 F.2d 947 (6th Cir. 1981). *See also Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985).

/s/ Timothy P. Greeley  
TIMOTHY P. GREELEY  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Dated: December 17, 2013